

Anti-Racism Commitment

We understand that health is the capacity of individuals and communities to reach their potential and racism regularly threatens and compromises it. Too often negative health outcomes experienced by black, indigenous people of color (BIPOC) are incorrectly attributed to personal choices or failings, when in reality systems of oppression create immense stress, make healthcare inaccessible and/or ineffective, and separate BIPOC communities from cultural and ancestral healing traditions. We also recognize that the effects of racism experienced by Black people have some of the deepest and deadliest effects on health and well-being. These impacts are directly evidenced by disproportionately high death rates among Black Americans during COVID-19 due to lack of adequate testing and access to treatment, as well as, black unarmed men being much more likely to die by police use of force than white armed men. In Health and Wellness Education, we believe Black Lives Matter, and that Black lives and communities deserve access to affirming, culturally appropriate, accessible health education and healthcare.

As college health professionals, we are committed to interrogating, challenging and removing barriers to health, including those we create or to which we contribute. Dismantling racist systems and building anti-racist programs and services that intentionally support the health and well-being for BIPOC students at Middlebury makes our community healthier and all of our students safer.

Specifically, we commit to:

- Acknowledging the historical and current harm caused to BIPOC by institutions of healthcare and higher education
- Acknowledging the social determinants of health including, but not limited to: race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability status
- Rooting our approach to peer education and advocacy in anti-racist frameworks that honor students' innate strengths and lived experiences
- Taking an empowerment approach to program and service planning, delivery, and assessment whereby we invite students to share needs, provide feedback, and be partners in health education. This approach aims to foster self-efficacy, empowerment, and determination to help individual students and the community reach health goals
- Setting and assessing individual and office-wide professional development goals related to health equity
- Engaging in the personal racial identity development work of acknowledging and understanding our privilege, working to change our internalized white supremacy, and interrupting racism at all levels when we see it
- Listening to and amplifying the needs, ideas, and work of our BIPOC students, colleagues, and thought leaders in public health